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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 000072

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#) [ADANA](#)

SUBJECT: TENSION BUILDS IN SE TURKEY AS PKK/KONGRA GEL KEEPS UP PRESSURE

REF: A. ANKARA 2884

[1](#)B. ANKARA 3112

[1](#)1. (SBU) Southeastern Turkey has seen an increase in violent clashes since the beginning of May. Both local and international community contacts residing in, or operating in, Van and Sirnak provinces told AMCONSUL ADANA that Jandarma in Van, Hakkari, Siirt and Sirnak provinces are in a defensive posture following a string of recent probable PKK/KONGRA GEL attacks, predominantly with remote-detonated land mine attacks or improvised explosive devices (IED) (REF A). They also note that locally assigned Interior Ministry officials in those provinces have become very gloomy and detached from contact with local community representatives, as well as very suspicious of any NGO or internationally linked development activity. One contact noted that many friends of his in Sirnak and Siirt province villages now fear the return of nineties-era violence in southeastern Turkey. They also note tensions between the Sirnak governate and the province's Jandarma leadership as the former tries to reduce the scope and mission of the provincial village guard system.

[1](#)2. (SBU) One contact reported stumbling into freshly-dug, presumably PKK/KONGRA GEL, underground bunkers and hideouts in the last few weeks in southern Van province, in the vicinity of Baskale sub-provincial region, in areas where Jandarma reportedly does not choose to patrol because of reported concerns about ambushes. A different contact reports multiple stories from villagers in mountainous Hakkari and Sirnak provinces (on the border with Iraq) of regular weekly PKK/KONGRA GEL transiting groups and logistic shipments. "They keep moving people from Iraq across the border into new mountain hideouts people up there say," noted the contact. Another contact reports strong "informal discouragement" by Jandarma of UNHCR proposals to perform monitoring missions in more remote areas of Sirnak, Siirt and Hakkari provinces because of strong security concerns.

[1](#)3. (SBU) There was a June 3 attack in a rural Hakkari district on a Jandarma sub-station which a local contact reported destroyed a Jandarma armored personnel carrier and injured several Jandarma members. It did not, however, result in the 12 casualties claimed by a Kurdish cause-sympathetic Internet outlet. Similar attacks reportedly occurred also on June 3 in Tunceli and Diyarbakir provinces. AMCON ADANA cannot confirm the details of these two attacks or any casualty figures.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Several UNHCR contacts also reiterated that they were concerned about potential organized violence directed at their southeastern Turkey offices and/or personnel since a recent Iraqi-origin fatwa reportedly specifically encouraged UN-oriented violence in the region. They considered those likely to respond to such a fatwa to lie outside KONGRA GEL membership, but wondered whether a splinter PKK/KONGRA GEL group might still be motivated to target the UN due to the fatwa's encouragement, a regional alliance with an Iraqi group, or fundamentalist sympathy. (Comment: PKK/KONGRA GEL is a leftist organization, so fundamentalist sympathy is unlikely; a desire for allies, however, may be more realistic. End Comment.)

5. (SBU) Most of the recent attacks have been in rural or village areas, although the attack narrowly averted on May 28 in Adana occurred downtown in a large population center. It was the first such attack in Adana since an October 15, 2003 alleged PKK/KONGRA GEL-linked attack on a Jandarma minibus in the Kurkculer suburb of Adana (REF B).

[1](#)6. (SBU) Local contacts report that PKK/KONGRA GEL is targeting "traditional targets" in its latest wave of attacks, such as Jandarma patrols and isolated police stations. The averted Adana attack is an exception to this pattern. It seems too soon to determine whether it marks a shift in PKK/KONGRA GEL strategy. (Comment: Reported PKK/KONGRA GEL arrests in Istanbul may lend some additional credence to the argument that the group is changing its tactics. End Comment.)

[1](#)7. (SBU) There also are two recent reports of civilians killed or seriously injured by stepping on landmines or encountering unexploded ordnance in parts of regions associated with recent KONGRA GEL activity.

18. (SBU) Comment: Violent attacks by PKK/KONGRA GEL, if they continue or accelerate, are likely to result in tighter security control in the southeast which could well check progress on

ADANA 00000067 002 OF 002

implementation of the new EU accession reform laws. End Comment.

19. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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